

During the aloja reveals squabbles, fights and killings are frequent, and this not only among the Indians but among the Chaco whites also. 578 ●

A couple of words now about the yuchan, also called palo borracho (drunken tree--Translator). It is a bombaceous tree whose scientific name is Chorisia insignis, and might well be called the cotton tree. It has a strange shape which justifies its vernacular name. The trunk is shaped like an oil jar, that is, narrow at its base, wide in the middle and narrow once more at the point where the crown forks. The trunk grows to a diameter of two meters and is covered with spiked bumps. At most it reaches a height of four or five meters and is often accompanied by a shoot growing at its base. The crown is at first made up of only two branches which later subdivide and form a wide crown of some eight, ten or more meters in diameter. The leaves are similar to those of the walnut but a little smaller and provide good shade. 137

From the bark, strips are cut which are used for tying bundles, as roofing material, to wrap and tie bunches of tobacco leaves and for any similar use. The Indians make their canoes from the trunk, all of a piece. In order to do this all they do is hollow it out with any old tool, since the wood is soft and easily worked when newly cut but later becomes harder than cork although spongy like it when dry. The Matacos use the name cuóu quiác for canoe, which in their tongue means "duck." 824
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But the thing which is especially interesting about the yuchan is its fruit, which in size and shape is like a lemon. When it is ripe, which usually occurs between November and January, according to its location, the lemons split into four lobes and there appears a plume-like puff of cotton, white as snow, which little by little is carried away by the wind. 137

One of these open lemons is about the size of a fist, and each tree produces hundreds of them each year.

The Indians make a limited use of this cotton, but the whites do not, although I have seen in Catamarca, where the number of these trees is small, white cloth made from this material which won prizes at the Córdoba exhibition.

In the Chaco there is an immense number of yuchans which grow mixed in with other hard-wood trees. If this cotton could be

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to the extent that the Indian comes under the influence of the whites and gets «civilized», to that extent also he loses the virtue of honesty, as he loses many other virtues characteristic of him while he is in a state of nature. This again is chiefly due to the bad example given by the whites themselves. The latter steal from one another, infringe the proprietary rights of the Indians and commit other wrongs against them. The Indians, who are on this point comparable with children, naturally think they may do the same, and their very sense of justice seems to require that the same measure as is meted to them by the whites, they may themselves measure to the latter again.

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The only occasion when crimes may be committed among the Choroti are during the great drinking-feasts. When the Indians are intoxicated with algaroba beer they easily begin to quarrel with one another, and these quarrels in extreme cases may end in homicide. Now the Indians certainly regard a homicide committed in a state of inebriation rather as an accident than as a crime, for the algaroba beer is sacred and an Indian inebriated by it is looked upon as possessed by a spirit and not in the ordinary sense responsible for his acts. But the Indians are anxious to prevent such accidents and this is above all the task of the women, who never themselves drink any intoxicating drinks. On two occasions I witnessed quarrels arising during the drinking-feasts. In one case an Indian, when excessively drunk, got mad and seized his bow and arrow to shoot another Indian on account of some old controversy. Immediately the women took hold of him, deprived him of his weapons, and compelled him to leave the scene of the feast and the whole village. He in fact left for an other village in the vicinity and remained absent for several days, when he was allowed to return to his home. The minds of the two adversaries were then perfectly tranquillized and there was no more grudge between them. In the other case also the women intervened and seized the weapons from the quarrelling men to prevent fights and manslaughter. It is usual in such cases that the offending party is sent away from the village or «exiled» for some time.

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Among the more advanced *Tobas* thefts occasionally take place, but there is a question whether this phenomenon is not due to the influence of the whites, since the Tobas have on the whole been more in contact with civilization than the Choroti. In the case of smaller thefts there is no public punishment among the Tobas; the affair is left to the private concern of the person robbed and the thief. In more serious cases the Council

584 chooses a husband for his daughter, but he would never go
 585 against his wife's wish. The ceremony is not celebrated.
 The son-in-law lives first at the hut of his wife's father where
 he stays for three months at least, working for him. Later
 591 he can build a hut for himself. The young couple live in a
 separate compartment.

Nowadays either the bride follows the bridegroom or he
 goes to live with her, according to circumstances. Ordinarily
 595 men have only one wife, some have two, but never more.
 [593] Except for adultery a husband never beats his wife. Although
 837 a woman is exposed to a severe beating if her husband disco-
 vers that she has betrayed him, it does not prevent many
 women from doing so. A woman will choose a day when
 her husband is absent and then send a child to tell her lover
 that she is alone. A couple must not be seen together for
 there would be some gossip. A man generally leaves an
 • [578] unfaithful wife after beating her first. He challenges his
 rival and they fight with knives. The different «mills»
 [831] must not be mixed up.

XVI. Chiefs

622 All the members of the tribe follow the *cacique* everywhere
 without protest. As for him, he is responsible for all the
 members of his group. If one of the latter has committed
 [672] a theft, even outside of the tribe, the *cacique* will be arrested
 by the police. Quarrels among members of the same group
 [627] are settled by the *cacique*. If a big *cacique* is killed in a
 [726] fight his troop retreats immediately, even if the other *caciques*
 are still living.

XVII. War

726 In ancient times, when a young man was going to war,
 he pinched the skin of his thigh and drove the sharpened
 825 bone of a jaguar into it. This operation was supposed to
 make the warrior courageous. Members of a war party
 did the same with a peccari's bone so they would be fierce,

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family will then be sent to the killer's village to ask whether the murdered woman's husband was at home the night before. If the answer is negative the murderer is known, and the families of the two victims will take up their arms and prepare to attack the killer's village. However, this was often merely a move undertaken to ensure the payment of blood money, compensation for the two lives, by the murderer's family.

Another example of the fatal results of a woman's infidelity is bound up in a custom that clearly shows the cruelty that formerly prevailed among the Mataco. If a man discovered that his wife had a lover, he could pretend ignorance and privately watch their habits and meeting place. One day he would follow his wife and wait in hiding until he could surprise the pair asleep. First he would kill his rival with an arrow, and then overpower the wife and cut her throat. He then dragged her out on to the path with legs far apart, slit up her stomach and lay her lover on top. The husband then crept back to his hut, seating himself at the fire with his bow and arrow in his hand waiting to see what would happen. Someone would soon come by the scene of the crime and come running back to the village, whereupon the man fled into the forest. As he could not be found a start was made with burying the two victims. In the meantime the murderer had crept close in and could hear what the wife's family said about him. At the moment they lowered the wife's corpse into the grave, and all eyes were looking down, the man shot one more arrow, killing the brother of the murdered woman. He then fled at great speed, reached his village and informed his family of the slaughter of the three persons. Both his father's and his mother's hands then armed themselves, and shortly afterwards the bands connected with the wife and the rival arrived to attack the village. This case is not merely a story, but a typical instance showing how adultery with the Mataco frequently leads to homicide and blood feuds between different bands.

Unfaithfulness is one of the chief reasons for divorce, which is a quite frequent occurrence with the Mataco. If on account of infidelity a man is divorced from his wife, he himself leaves the house taking with him only his personal effects such as fishing net, tinder, bow and arrow etc. He moves first to his parents' house, and later to the family of his new wife. Under these circumstances he cannot take his children with him unless they are so big that they themselves desire it. If the woman's unfaithfulness is the cause of the divorce, she will be evicted from the house, and not until later will her family come and fetch her personal property such as clay vessels, jars, harvest of forest fruit, plus any goats and sheep. The children then stay with the father and can be brought up by his mother or some other female relative. It is always a general rule that at divorces the injured party retains house and children, and only the personal property is divided. However, it is not always that things go according to rule. Often, for example, an injured woman and her mother will visit her divorced husband's new house when he is away, remove his personal things and perhaps burn down the house.

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[766] naked on the plaza where the small children could throw stones at it and the hungry dogs could lick it. No one apparently wanted to touch the corpse and when the missionary ordered the Indians to bury it, they merely removed the remains to the bush but did not bother to dig a grave. The missionary attributed the people's indifference to the fact that the girl had no close relatives and that she was ill-tempered. [736] According to the Indians, her bad disposition was also the cause of her unhappy love life.

● [578] *Third case.* A boy of 16 and his 14 year old wife often quarreled until, finally, the boy committed suicide. The girl at first appeared unconcerned but later joined in the death wailing. Soon afterwards she became depressed because some of the people held her responsible for her husband's death. Three days later she ate sachasandia fruit late in the afternoon expecting that the poison would take effect when she slept and when no one would detect her condition. She was discovered, however, and the missionary, who was called in great haste, was able to save her life. Although her parents reacted with concern, they seemed less disturbed than her parents in-law. [797]

[881] *Fourth case.* The cause for Teresa's attempted suicide was sexual frustration. This girl was about 13 years old and, since she had already menstruated, was considered to be an adult. She was extremely anxious to find a husband but all the young men were already married. Out of sheer desperation she set out for Espinillo, a village near her camp, hoping to attract the attention of the Argentine settlers there. Her relatives, however, prevented her from carrying out this project. As a result she became very despondent and finally ate sachasandia. When she felt the worst effects of the poison she became panic-stricken and went herself to the dispensary to get an emetic, which saved her life. Her widowed mother was deeply concerned and could not be persuaded that the girl would recover. During her daughter's illness, she often woke the girl from sleep, fearing that she might actually be dead.

[586] *Fifth case.* Manuel, a boy of about 17, was married to an illtempered girl who at that time was pregnant by him. Tiring of her sharp tongue, he abandoned her and married another girl, Manuela. His first wife refused to resign herself to the new situation and continually [578] quarreled with her former husband and his new wife. Her aggressiveness so depressed the couple that both decided to take poison to escape the vituperations of the incensed woman. In this case no one seemed particularly affected by the attempted suicide, perhaps because neither of the victims had living parents. It was a small child who [797] warned the missionary in the middle of the night. The missionary

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forced the already uncounscious patients to swallow salt water and so to vomit the poison, but as soon as they came to themselves they struggled against the missionary in their will to die. Their resistance to care was overcome only with the help of several other persons. Both of them recovered but remained depressed for a long time afterwards.

Shortly after these events the deserted wife gave birth to a boy. She evinced no interest in the baby and wanted to kill him. The child's grandmother and other relatives, especially the women, opposed her intention and brought the baby to the missionary who tried without decided to resort to bribery and laid before the mother cloth and corn from the store, which he promised to give her if she suckled the baby. To this temptation the woman finally yielded. As soon as she had suckled the boy his life was safe, for a woman never kills an infant once she has nursed it.

Sixth case. Here the main character in the drama was Ipatsi, a 17 year old girl. She was an orphan whose sole relative in the village was a classificatory grandmother. She and her husband (25 years old) were incongenial and quarreled almost constantly. Then one day she poisoned herself. Her grandmother, who noticed the effects of the sachasandia late the same evening, sent a child to inform the missionary in charge. He arrived soon afterwards and found the girl conscious but very weak. She was crying hysterically. A few women who were standing nearby watched the scene in a detached way. Her husband sat on the edge of the bed, but seemed sulky and indifferent to her plight. Thanks to an emetic, she recovered. A few days later she departed from the her husband, despite the fact that she had given birth to a child.

Seventh case. Bertie, a boy of 14, ate sachasandia three times in one week and each time was saved by the missionary. He himself gave the following explanation for his attempted suicide. Teresa, whose case was described above, had cast her eyes upon him although he was distantly related to her. The boy's father encouraged her and insisted that Bertie marry her although he showed the greatest reluctance and insisted that he was still a child. Neither the girl nor his father would listen to him so that the boy had no peace and "could not sleep at night". At last he took poison. His plight aroused little sympathy except in his elder sister and, of course, in Teresa. The father died soon after the attempted suicide and so Bertie did not have to marry Teresa.

Eight case. The victim was a boy of 16 whose bright and cheerful disposition made him generally popular. He had joined the mission to avail to persuade the mother to receive her child. The missionary

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been told about a Toba or a Pilaga who killed himself. Apparently, suicide is a culture trait restricted to the Matako. 762
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Can this pathological condition be attributed to the life in the mission and to the discipline imposed upon the natives who have shown willingness to become Christians? The psychological motivation for conversion is undoubtedly fear of the white men and hunger. The missions are a buffer between the Indians and the ruthless white colonists. In the missions the Indians find jobs and, in case of distress, food. They also receive free medical treatment. The price they must pay for these privileges is to give up dancing and drinking, to abandon warfare and native sports and to forget shamanism. In addition they are expected to go to church twice daily and the children and many adults spend part of the day in school. Life under such conditions is extremely dull. All the activities that made life worth while disappear unless they can secretly play hockey or indulge in a drinking bout. This, of course, they quite frequently do. Although their present situation can explain their indifference, their anxieties and their lack of attachment to life, can the mission discipline be held responsible for the Metako suicidal mania? 762
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In six of the cases cited above, marital maladjustment was blamed for the suicide attempt. In one case, the suicide was attributed to lack of sexual gratification. One couple attempted suicide because of the insults showered upon them by an angry and frustrated woman. One case may be ascribed both to sexual maladjustment and fear (the case of Martin). Criticism by neighbors is the cause in one instance. In only one case that of the old woman who had lost her son, can grief be considered the determining reason for the suicide. 762
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In addition, there is no doubt that suicide among these people has a decidedly aggressive character. The Matako use suicide as a threat; by killing themselves, they punish the person who has offended them. The punitive character of suicide leads to the problem of aggression and aggressiveness among these people. In daily life little direct aggression is shown in their mutual relations. There are almost no quarrels; ordinarily men are not harsh to the women. Children are coddled and are seldom scolded. Nevertheless, strong aggressive tendencies exist. Whoever has witnessed a hockey party on the Pilcomayo loses any illusion he may have had about the gentleness and softness of Matako manners. In its brutality and fierceness each hockey party resembles a pitched battle. The Indians paint themselves and dress as if they were getting ready to face a real enemy. The teams are formed by men who are related by blood or who live in the same community. The adversaries are frequently members of bands which are on unfriendly 157
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[157] terms. Every party ends with broken limbs, smashed skulls or at least
 [52] ~~used to persuade the mother to receive her child. The missionary~~
 with black and blue marks. The fact that they gamble for high stakes
 [505] on the outcome contributes to the violence of the party and to the pas-
 sionate ardor of the players.

[157] Aggressiveness finds another outlet in drinking bouts. Fights are
 [578] so intimately associated with these alcoholic enjoyments that, before a
 [293] party begins, the chief gives a long talk in which he exhorts the men
 to refrain from violence and to have a good time in peace and harmo-
 ny. When the men begin to get inebriated the women conceal the wea-
 pons in the bush. Despite these precautions, quarrels and fights are
 rather common. Men remember slights and insults delivered months-
 before and belatedly challenge the offender. Threats are exchanged and
 hard words are followed by acts of violence.

[154] Formerly, of course, suppressed bad feelings found an outlet in
 [701] the practice of black magic and aggressive personalities were able to
 indulge in regular warfare and scalping parties.

[762] In order to maintain discipline and to prevent violence, mission-
 [177] naries have prohibited hockey, drinking and, of course, witchcraft and
 [797] warfare. As a result there is in modern Mataco society no institution-
 [154] alized means for any person to give vent to his feelings of anger and
 aggression. Suicide is the only way open to punish the offender.

It is possible that interest in life itself decreases as the Indian is
 progressively prevented from carrying on any of his former activities.
 In addition, he is faced with increasingly difficult economic problems.
 The struggle for life is harsher and the conditions more humiliating.
 The Indians are well aware that they are the underdogs.

In a general way, we may say that the Mataco have no resilience.
 They are abused, down trodden by the whites but rarely revolt. They
 accept their lot with abject resignation. Why should they bother, is
 their attitude; since the white man has come it has always been the
 same. Missionaries say that they rarely resist temptation; a man who
 for years has been a good Christian, "sins" at the first opportunity.
 Moreover, the Mataco are decidedly unacquisitive; they give away for
 [556] trifles the very objects for which they have worked for months in the
 sugar cane factories. They do not even bother to increase their small
 herds. Such indifference to possessions increases with old age. An old
 man asked, "Why should I bother to get more goats, since I am about
 [768] to die? This behavior undoubtedly carries over from the past when
 the property of the dead was destroyed.

Nevertheless, since similar conditions prevail among other Indian
 groups without provoking a comparable predilection for suicide, the

Mataco SI 7
Toba SI 12

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Matacos or Noctenes

This tribe is also very numerous; it lives on the right bank of the Pilcomayo River, occupying the part opposite the zone occupied by the Toba, with whom they maintain friendly relations which are disturbed from time to time, especially at the time when the algarobas and other fruits ripen.

A group of these Indians in times past formed a part of the San Antonio del Pilcomayo Mission, where today the Chaco Delegation is located, occupying the mission buildings. But because they are as fickle, or perhaps more so, than the Toba, Religion and the State could make little progress with such Indians.

These Indians are very numerous and in small groups extend as far as the shores of the Bermejo; their language is totally different from that of the other tribes and they hardly mix, although they maintain friendly relations with the Toba, to whom they are considered to be inferior.

Their physiognomy is overly languid; sadness can be read in their faces, and they are very miserable; nevertheless they are ferocious in war, in jealousy, or in a state of drunkenness; they injure and kill one another. Out of these considerations the women refrain from drinking to the state of inebriation in order to prevent their husbands' disorders and to hide the weapons in the event of the outbreaks which frequently occur (1).

1. In the drinking bouts they are the same as the Toba; they make a mead from the fruits of the algaroba, which is almost as intoxicating as brandy; they also make mead from other wild fruits; they do not make chicha because they hardly plant maize.

They are more peaceful Indians than the Toba, are not very warlike, and do not attack the houses of the whites but profit when they can from the latter's cattle, especially should a famine break out due to a lack of wild fruits.

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433 They do not work, plant, or do anything similar; they
222 are but mediocre fishermen and barely hunters. To live they
241 lay up great stocks of chañar, algarrobas, and mistol fruits, and
with some gourd seeds placed under the earth they have
extraordinary harvests if the year is moderately rainy.

786 They organize their orgies when the algarrobas, chañar,
578 and mistol are in season, and then the quarrels and murders occur
682 among the men; these crimes go unpunished by the authorities,
for there are none. But if the one who has perished had rela-
tives they will take revenge.

342 /320/ They do not bother to build houses or such things.
513 They make a kind of oven; for it they bend some branches of
small trees, fix them to the ground, cover these branches with
straw or grass, and they sleep underneath in a pile in the com-
pany of their dogs.

164 This is the reason for the excessive mange which kills
515 them and makes them look so disgusting, since they are not at
all partisans of the daily bath, as the Chiriguano are, and when
they do bathe, they roll about in the river sand or in the ashes
of their oven-houses.

584 They do not seek the consent of their parents for marriage
585 nor do they have ceremonies. Do two young persons, a man
and a woman, love each other? They leave the common settle-
ment, go to the woods, stay a few weeks, and then return,
now married, to live with their in-laws or to make another
oven like the one of their elders.

586 Young people divorce each other easily, but they are
152 more constant than the Chiriguano in married life. Nonetheless,
837 the women are very jealous and do not readily consent to their
593 husbands' being with other women; for this reason they keep
them content with the work of bringing them much fruit from
the forest and caressing them.

302 Men and women cut their hair; some of them stain their
301 faces and pierce their ear lobes, in which they put a piece of
wood, like the Toba, but this is not a distinctive mark of the
race.